



Third Events

June 17, 1997

## **Tuesday Morning Sessions Feature Educational Needs and Strong Role Models for Disabled Girls and Women**

U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley was eloquent on the importance of recent legislative advancements to benefit disabled children, youth and adults in his address to the Forum's opening session on Tuesday. Following are a few quotes:

"Everyone should be entitled to quality educational opportunities--because a centerpiece of ensuring equal opportunity and participation in the rights, privileges, and duties of citizenship--is education."

"All of you have worked hard in your own countries to help make sure that every citizen has the same rights and opportunities as every other--and I congratulate you on your tireless efforts. Those of you who are gathered here this week come from a variety of backgrounds and cultures. You have different traditions, different perspectives."

"But amidst these differences--one thing is clear--and one thing above all else is shared. All of you understand that every human being has the same priceless value and worth as every other. And you know that discrimination against one person harms the entire human race."

"Here in the United States we have a long and proud history of working to guarantee equality for all Americans. We have made great strides in this regard in many areas--from racial equality to gender equality to equality for all Americans regardless of disabilities."

"I am proud to say that last week my Assistant Secretary for the Office of Special Education programs Judy Heumann and I had the opportunity to be at the White House for President Clinton's signing of the renewed Individuals With Disabilities Education Act."

"This law, first enacted 22 years ago, helps to ensure that no child will be pushed aside because someone doesn't think that he or she can learn. This law continues to open doors that should never be shut--and to make sure that every young person should be allowed to get the skills in order to live independently. This law supports the understanding that every person with a disability has a contribution to make to building up a nation."

**Assistant Secretary Judith Heumann also focused in on the urgency of education for disabled girls.** Judith Heumann began her speech by talking about her own difficulties

gaining equal access to education as a child in the 1950's. "The school officials could not see me, they could only see my wheelchair," said Heumann, "when my parents tried to enroll me in school, they were told I was a fire hazard."

Heumann reported that concern was expressed at the 1994 Blind Conference in Africa that approximately 65% of the world's disabled women are illiterate. This is a major problem and should be immediately addressed. Only after great inroads are made regarding this problem can disabled women begin to take control over their lives.

Some of the action items contained in the United Nations Platform for Action are:

- ◆ Career advancement and higher education for disabled women
- ◆ Establish sufficient resources to ensure that disabled women contain pursue higher education
- ◆ Continue to pursue technological advances that directly benefit and impact on women with disabilities and guarantee that these resources are available in numbers.
- ◆ Continue to ensure that efforts are being made to develop better educated teachers
- ◆ The development of better/improved teaching materials

Heumann's concern was that "we" started educating disabled children wrong. First they were segregated in to classes and schools that only served the disabled. Then efforts were made to integrate disabled children into the classrooms, however the schools, teachers and students were not prepared. Efforts must be made to address all of the many nuances of ensuring that disabled children can fully participate in the educational systems throughout the world.

Disabled women desperately need role models. There are very few today, yet there need to be many more in all parts of society. She reminded the Forum that: "Human rights are women's rights, and women's rights are human rights."

**Next, Marca Bristo, Chair of the National Council on Disability (NCD) wanted everyone to know that recently celebrated her 20 year anniversary of being a woman who is living with a disability.** She stated that although many individuals often question her on why she would "celebrate" such an occasion, she pointed out that having her disability has allowed her the opportunity to become actively involved in trying to make a difference in the lives of other disabled women around the world.

When asked, "what happened to change me and beginning to accept my disability," she always answered, "you happened," the many disabled people who have entered her life over the years and made a difference in helping her to see the need to become more involved and make a difference. Only after another disabled woman reached out to her and

discussed the many problems facing disabled women did she see the need to become actively involved.

Bristo then turned to Judy Heumann and told her, “Judy, you **are** a fire hazard. Just look at the fire you’ve started here among all these women.” Bristo then recounted how many years ago, in a small hotel room, a small group of women, many who are present at the Forum, began to lay the organizational ground work and build the strong coalition of women activists that we now have today representing many countries around the world.

Bristo ended with a story about a recent experience she had with one of her heroes, feminist Gloria Steinem. The two women were seated next to each other at a panel discussion. Bristo said, “Gloria Steinem grabbed my hand and lifted it up and said, ‘Marca, we [women] can go nowhere until you can go everywhere.’”

**Brigitta Anderson of the Swedish Handicap International Aid (SHIA), Sweden, described their support for 60 projects in 18 different developing countries that directly impact on the lives of people with disabilities.** Half of the projects directly benefit women.

Anderson recounted how over the years SHIA had come to realize how different the priorities and methodologies were between projects designed by men and those by women. SHIA administrators concluded that: “Support a woman and you support a family. Support a man and you support one person.”

An example of a recent project was support for disabled women from poor countries to participate in the disability caucus and meetings within the UN 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing. Her organization then created a special committee for dealing specifically with womans issues.

**Yukiko Nakanishi, Japan, Founder of the Asia Disability Institute presented a report on Asian attitudes towards disabled women.** Some of her commenter were as follows:

“A woman has no house to rest in at anytime. Woman are treated throughout Asia as substandard beings, and often are looked upon as property and possessions. Social status is directly related to the quality of life for all woman throughout Asia.

Due to the commitment of women/mothers staying at home, there often are incredibly strong ties that develop between a disabled child and the mother. These ties are so strong that on one occasion, it lead to the attempted double suicide of a mother and disabled child. The mother was concerned that she could not allow the child to, go throughout life with a disability.

It is always the mother and never the father who is responsible for the birth of a disabled child.”

## **Did you know?**

....That the International Leadership Forum for Women with Disabilities is being broadcast LIVE on the Internet? Each day, one select workshop is audio broadcast live from: <http://www.voxware.com/vcsevents.html>

Internet participants can not only **hear** what you are hearing, they can also ask questions of the presenters! Have your loved ones go to: <http://www.voxware.com/vcs.html> to download FREE Voxchat 1.0 software. After installing, they can conference on their PC!

Copies of this application are also on the Internet Cafe computers. Talk to your friends from there--if they download and install Voxchat 1.0. For general information on the Forum point your Web browser to: <http://www.prodworks.com/ilf>

## **Brazilian Dance Team Excites Forum Participants**

Following is a brief description of the Brazilian dance team whose performance was one of the highlights of the Talent Night.

Beth Caetano is a ballerina who has been dancing in many cities around the world. At the moment she works at the Centro de Vida Independente in Rio de Janeiro (CVI-RJ). She also leads workshops and teaches courses in rehabilitation through her dancing (touch-improvisation) and sexuality.

Teresa Tequechel and Alexander Franco are ballet dancers who studied at Angel Vianna - Central de Estudos do Movimento e Artes. They have taken the following courses: contemporary dance, motor skills recuperation, and therapy through dance. Teresa worked at Sarah Hospital (Brasilia, Brazil) in 1994 and 1995 with people who had brain and spinal cord injuries. She is now doing this kind of work in Rio de Janeiro.

Alexander has been both a choreographer and a teacher at Angel Vianna School since 1992 and has been a coordinator since 1995.

Their inspiration is that dance is not only an art form and a universal instrument of communication, but also as a way to respect individuality and enjoy life.

## **Men's Focus Group Meeting on Wednesday Morning**

Participants are needed for a **men's focus group** entitled "**Allies to women in leadership**". All men of the Forum are invited to the Diplomat Room (Meeting Room Level) tomorrow, Wednesday, from 10:00 to 12:00. This is a part of the research agenda of the conference, and will add perspective to the data on disability advocacy for women being gathered in other parts of the Forum.

## **Seminar at the Internet Café**

Wednesday, June 18, 6:30 - 8:30 PM in the Chesapeake Suite A conversation with Marion Metcalf and Al Gilman about "Virtual Team Experiences," or how to get results using electronic communications as a tool towards pursuing common goals. Electronic communications and the web can be powerful tools, but users must be extra careful in following some basic rules of communication and leadership. Gilman and Metcalf, a husband and wife team, will share their insights about how to clarify the purpose of your work, cultivate and capitalize on leadership from all team members and use technology to move information and meet your goals. Call xt: 7036 to arrange language interpretation or other accommodations.

Join the global electronic network for women with disabilities. Our FREE automated e-mail list is an easy and effective way to maintain contact with disabled women around the world. The Women's International Linkage on Disability (WILD), California chapter has set up this list and invites all women at the conference to join. We have regular discussions on disability issues, share resources and exchange information. To join, send an e-mail to [cal-wild@igc.org](mailto:cal-wild@igc.org), in the subject line, write subscribe. In the message, write your e-mail address and tell us about your connection to the disability community. See you in cyberspace!

## **Transportation to Airports Friday, Saturday, Sunday**

If you need lift-equipped transportation to an airport on Friday, Saturday, or Sunday, you must turn in the following information to the Forum Secretariat by Thursday morning: your name, the number, date, day and time of your flight; which airport you need to go to; which airline; and which hotel you will leave from. Please print clearly!!

## **Announcements**

- ◆ **Monolingualists Alert!** All you English-only speaking people please remember to get your earphones for the Wednesday morning keynotes. Lesbia Solarzano will present in Spanish.

- ◆ A **Lost and Found Box** has been established at the Forum Secretariat.
- ◆ **Forum photographs** from Sunday and Monday events are now on sale in the lobby of the Meeting Room Level. They are an excellent quality and will be just as useful for your disability newsletters as they will be enjoyable as mementos.
- ◆ **SEX SEX SEX and other** aspects of women's lives will be the theme of Wednesday night's Video Program from 8:00-11:00 p.m. in the Ballroom. Videos from Sweden, Brazil, New Zealand, the USA, the UK and Bangladesh will be shown. A description of the Bangladesh video follows:  
  
*"Low Trolley--High Spirit"*, a 27-minute film from Bangladesh about women and girls with spinal cord disabilities, with Mohua Paul available to explain her organization, the Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralyzed.
- ◆ **Special Meeting** on "Identification of Training Needs for Women with Disabilities in Developing Countries", Friday, 11:00-12:30. Meet on Meeting Room Level (near the Research Desk). For more information, see Evy Messell, ILO, Hyatt Room 236 or Suzanne Reier, WID, Forum Secretariat.
- ◆ A few **large print versions** of the Forum Programs are still available at the Secretariat, thanks to the great Don Barrett of the Department of Education.

